The Strength Of Us

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by orphan_account

Summary

Once again Cole has a nightmare flashback of what happened to him years ago. But also again, Hanzo is there by his side to help him out and make things better.

Waking abruptly, drenched in sweat, Cole's chest heaved as he fought to draw in air. A relentless wave of panic surged through him, triggered by the vivid recollection of the traumatic incident that resulted in the loss of his arm. His nightmare relentlessly replayed the ordeal at the hands of Two and One, the people who tortured him…

Desperate to escape the suffocating grip of his memories, Cole found himself resorting to a ritual he had adopted in moments of sheer panic. His remaining fist pounded against his temples, a self-inflicted agony that seemed paradoxically comforting— it provided a temporary escape from the overwhelming mental anguish. Unlike scars left by other forms of self-harm, these blows yielded no visible marks, yet they provided a temporary escape, a brief interlude from the enduring torment that held him captive within himself.

Tears began to slip down his face as he tried to stop them. He wanted so bad for these memories to just go away and leave him alone, but it didn't seem like that woud happen any time soon. Years and years had past since he lost his arm yet these memories were still taunting him like crazy. Intense and terrifyingly so.

Soon enough though, Hanzo woke up, hearing the crying and quickly grabbed Cole's wrist to stop him from banging on his head any longer. *"Hanii,* it's okay, it's okay, I'm here," he said quickly.

However, the sudden movement startled Cole, causing him to recoil and tumble off the bed because of it. He pushed himself back up against the wall and began to pull at his hair as another form of hurting himself to get the pain to stop.

"Cole…" Hanzo said, getting out of the bed and walking over to where Cole was on the floor. "What happened, darling? Are you okay?"

"No," Cole cried out feeling the tears fall even faster.

Hanzo knelt down beside him and opened up his arms for Cole to hug him which he quickly took. "It's okay, I'm here now, I won't let anyone hurt you ever again."

Cole shook his head in a panic. He was unable to speak or respond in any meaningful way. He could feel his own rapidly beating heart that he knew his lover could feel as well.

"You're safe here, *hanii,* I promise," Hanzo reassured him. "No one will ever hurt you like that again as long as I'm around. I promise."

Still, Cole couldn't find a way to respond. He just continued to tremble intensely as the events played in his mind over and over and over again. His mind felt like a whirlwind, caught in a relentless loop of anguish. With every ounce of his being, he wanted to believe in the safety Hanzo promised, but the memories held him captive, their grip unyielding.

"Focus on me, love, focus on me," Hanzo pushed Cole back so they were now eye-to-eye. "Can you take deep breaths with me?"

Another frantic shake of the head, Cole couldn't find himself able to breathe at this moment in time. It seemed too daunting and too extreme. As much as he wanted it to be over with but he knew his abilities would not be able to go that far. Deep breaths would turn into heaving and into an even deeper panic attack that he just couldn't handle right now.

"That's okay, that is one hundred precent okay, my dear," Hanzo brushed some hair behind Cole's ear, "Do you want to do that grounding technique Angela taught you?" he asked.

"Y-Yeah." Cole nodded.

"Okay, name me five things you can see. It can be anything here, just five things you can see," Hanzo said gently.

Cole took a shaky breath, trying to focus on the present moment. "The lamp… the photo of Nita on the dresser… the blanket on the bed… the window curtains… and yer eyes," he said, his gaze finally meeting Hanzo's.

"Perfect. Now what is four things you can feel?" Hanzo smiled softly.

"Um… the carpet… the wall… yer hands on my shoulders… the air conditionin'…" Cole said, his voice still trembling.

"Now what is three things you can hear?" Hanzo said, half way through the technique now.

"T-The um baby monitor… my breathing… yer voice…" Cole said, a faint smile forming on his face as he said the last thing.

"Right, you're doing great." Hanzo nodded as he praised Cole. "Now what about two things you can smell?"

Cole thought for a moment before finally speaking. "Yer hair stuff and yer cologne…" he chuckled softly. "I smell ya."

"Well, I want to smell good for my love. Now lastly, what can you taste?" Hanzo asked gently.

"My toothpaste from last night…" Cole said as he took a deep breath. "Okay… okay, I'm okay now I think…"

Hanzo smiled, taking his hands off of Cole's shoulders and grabbing his remaining hand with one of his. "You did perfect. I'm glad that worked on you."

"Yeah… me too…" Cole looked dpwn as Hanzo gently squeezed his hand. "Sorry 'm so difficult sometimes. I don't want to bother ya but I just can't help it. I'm sorry."

Hanzo lifted Cole's chin gently, meeting his eyes with an expression filled with understanding and love. "Hey, listen to me, Cole. You never bother me, not for a single moment. I'm here because I want to be, because I love you. Your struggles are mine, and I'll always be here to support you through them."

“I just wish I didn’t have to put ya through this, it’s not fair on ya…” Cole tried again to place the blame on himself.

“Hanii, I knew what I was getting into when I married you. In sickness and in health, we’ll always be together. Sickness may not inherently imply helping you like this, but to me it does. And I’m always here for you,” Hanzo said firmly, hoping his words would get through to Cole.

“I don’t deserve ya,” Cole whispered, his voice barely audible.

Hanzo cupped Cole’s face with his hand that wasn’t already holding the other’s. His thumb gently wiping away the lingering tears. “Cole, love isn’t about deserving. It’s about being there for each other, especially in the moments when we feel we don’t deserve it. You’re not a burden, and you're certainly not alone in this.”

Cole let out a shaky breath, feeling loved and renewed after his traumatic nightmare. “I love you, Hanzo.”

Hanzo;s eyes shimmered with tenderness. “And I love you, Cole. Remember, even in the darkest moments, our love shines brightest. You’re not alone, and you never will be.”

As they sat in the quiet intimacy of their shared vulnerability, the bond between them deepened. In that moment, the challenges they faced seemed a little less daunting, knowing they had each other to lean on, no matter what lay ahead.

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